



The Massachusetts Council
ON GAMING AND HEALTH

Gambling Among Youth/Adolescents FACT SHEET

What is gambling?

Gambling is risking something of value on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning is less than certain.¹¹

What is problem gambling?

Problem gambling is characterized by gambling behavior which leads to adverse consequences for the person who gambles, others, and the community.¹²

What constitutes social gambling?

Social gamblers gamble for entertainment, typically will not risk more than they can afford, often gamble with friends, chase losses briefly, gamble for limited periods of time, and are not preoccupied with gambling.¹³

See DSM-5 for clinical definitions

The Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health: A Resource For Help

The Council's Helpline provides live, confidential, and compassionate support 24-hours a day, 7-days a week:

800-426-1234.

Helpline workers provide:

- Information about problem gambling
- Referrals to self-help groups, treatment providers, and other community resources.

For more information, visit macgh.org or contact us at info@macgh.org or 617-426-4554.

Youth & Adolescent Risk for Gambling Problems

Any young person can develop a gambling problem, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status.

Though gambling problems do not discriminate, research has shown that among youths the following groups are more susceptible to gambling problems:

- Those who gamble at a young age^{1,2}
- Males^{1,3,4,5}
- Those with a family history of gambling problems⁴
- Those in a lower socioeconomic status group¹
- Those who have low and/or declining parental monitoring between the ages of 11 and 14⁶
- Those who gamble:
 - On cards
 - At casinos
 - On routine daily events³
 - On games of skill (basketball, pool, golf, etc.)



Disordered Gambling and Risky Behaviors

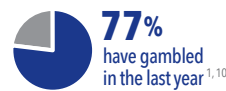
Disordered gambling is associated with numerous other risky behaviors among young people.

Compared to adolescents aged 16–17 who do not gamble, those aged 16–17 who do gamble are more likely to:

- Use alcohol/Be dependent on alcohol
- Use drugs/Be dependent on drugs
- Experience depression⁷

Compared to youth who do not have gambling problems, youths with gambling problems are more likely to:

- Use alcohol, binge drink^{2,4,8}
- Use illicit drugs^{2,4,8}
- Smoke cigarettes⁴
- Be delinquent, have conduct problems^{2,4}
- Attempt suicide²
- Engage in peer and dating violence and delinquency⁹
- Report negative peer influences⁹



macgh.org
Helpline: 800-426-1234

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Youth & Adolescent Gambling Prevalance Rates

Studies have estimated the percentage of youths/
adolescents who gamble and have gambling problems.

GAMBLING PREVALENCE AMONG 14–21 YEAR OLDS:

Gambled in the past year^{1, 10} **68%**

Males **77%**

Ages 14–15 68%

Ages 16–17 76%

Ages 18–19 83%

Ages 20–21 80%

Females **58%**

Ages 14–15 53%

Ages 16–17 52%

Ages 18–19 65%

Ages 20–21 64%

Gambled twice a week or more¹ **11%**

Males 18%

Females 4%

Gambling by activity type in the past year³

• Card games 33%

• Office pools, charity 30%

• Lottery 29%

• Sports betting 23%

• Games of skill 21%

• Bingo 12%

• Dice games 9%

• Casino gambling 7%

• Gambling machines 6%

• Horse or dog tracks 5%

• Internet 2%

Prevention Strategies

• Increased Parental Awareness of Youth Gambling

A recent study in Canada confirmed previous reports by youth that parents do not perceive youth gambling to be a serious issue.¹⁴ Of 13 potential adolescent risky behaviors, gambling is viewed as the least problematic.¹⁴

• Increased Teacher Awareness and Education

Another recent study in Canada, assessing teachers' awareness and attitudes regarding adolescent gambling and other high-risk behaviors, found that gambling was viewed as being the least serious of issues affecting youth. Drug use and school violence topped the list.¹⁵

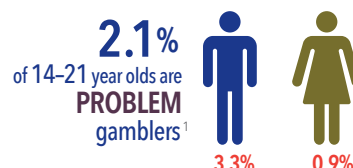
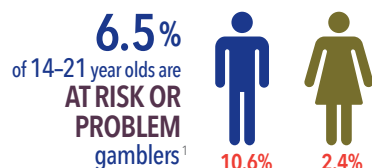
Signs of a Gambling Disorder

A person shows signs of gambling disorder if he/she:

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money to achieve the desired excitement.
- Exhibits restless or irritable behavior when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
- Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop gambling.
- Is preoccupied with thoughts about gambling.
- Gambles when feeling distress (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
- Chases one's losses/returns another day to get even.
- Lies to conceal the extent of gambling.
- Jeopardizes a significant relationship, job, or opportunity because of gambling.
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.

For more information about gambling disorder, please refer to evaluation tools provided by the DSM-5.

At Risk and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among 14–21 Year Olds





Endnotes

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11. Korn, D.A. & Shaffer, H.J. (1999). Gambling and the Health of the Public: Adopting a Public Health Perspective. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 15(4), 289–365.
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